

Testimony Regarding S.B. No. 948

March 3, 2021

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Thank you for your time, your service, and for the opportunity to express my support for Senate Bill 948.

I write to you as a Danbury resident and parent of two children in the Danbury Public Schools.

While steps have been made in the right direction to fix the ECS formula, it's long phase-in schedule means that the majority of our current students will never be fully and equitably funded. Over the past decade, student populations across the state have changed along with their needs. Districts like Danbury that have been underfunded for years are left scrambling to accommodate a steady increased student population with rising high levels of English Learners, Special Education students and low-income students. Meanwhile, Districts that have been overfunded due to declining enrollment continue to get more than their fair share.

Connecticut's school population is becoming increasingly diverse, but our funding principles don't support the students who are increasing our state's diversity.

Currently, districts only receive an additional 15% added to their ECS funding to support the needs of an EL student. This is not enough. We know from parents and educators that these students desperately need more access to resources and while their districts would love to give them these resources, they simply cannot afford to.

Our students deserve to be funded based on what they need in order to be successful in and outside of the classroom. Our students who attend magnet schools, charter schools, and other public schools of choice deserve to be funded through a formula that takes their learning needs into account. Our English Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students navigating through their education in communities that experience concentrated poverty, all deserve additional funding at a rate that makes a real, tangible difference.

Our students, our schools, and our communities need real change, and we need it now.

The racial funding gap in Connecticut is a pervasive and systemic problem. Our school districts that have student populations that are majority BIPOC spend \$2,300 less per student compared to districts that have a majority white student population. By passing S.B. 948, you can help address these disparities, reduce the state's racial funding gap by 68%, and make sure students are at the center of the conversation about education funding.

Over the past year, many have talked about the need for equity in our state. Equity starts with education and opportunities for all of our students. I'm counting on all of you to take every single student into account when you're making decisions about how to fund their education, and to give all of our students a fighting chance to not only succeed, but excel.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to support S.B. 948.

Sincerely,

Rachel Chaleski